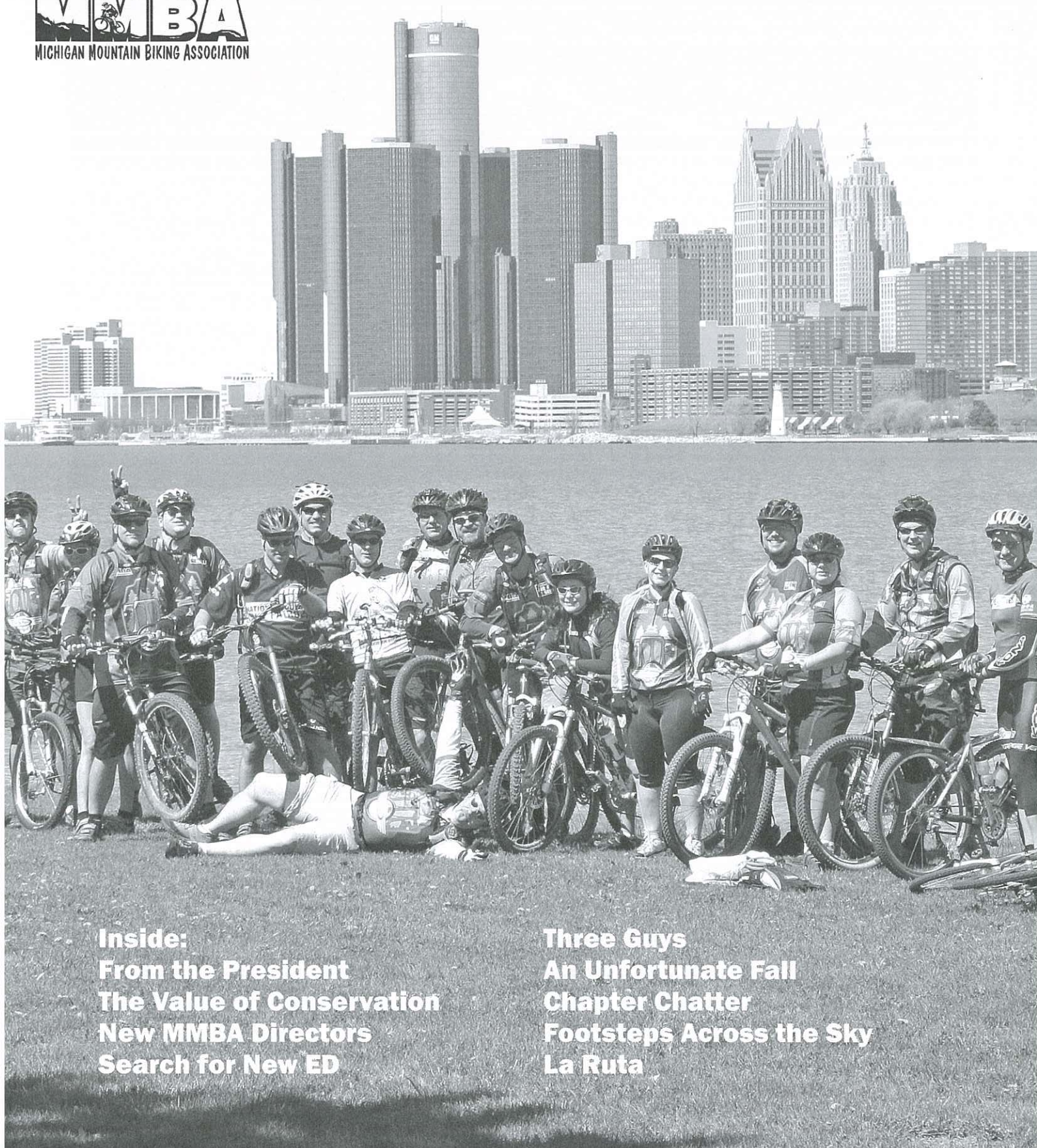


SUMMER 2007 ISSUE No. 80

# BENT RIM BUGLE

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MICHIGAN MOUNTAIN BIKING ASSOCIATION



**Inside:**  
**From the President**  
**The Value of Conservation**  
**New MMBA Directors**  
**Search for New ED**

**Three Guys**  
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The Michigan Mountain Biking Association (MMBA) is a 501-(C)(3) non-profit organization. We have 1,600 members in nine chapters throughout Michigan. The mission of the MMBA is to promote responsible mountain biking and to work toward the goals of common land access and natural resource protection through interaction with policy makers, the cycling industry, race promoters, mountain bikers and other trail users. The Bent Rim Bugle is published four times a year (March, June, Sept, Dec.) by the Michigan Mountain Biking Association and distributed to all members. It is made possible by volunteers and riders like you.

#### Bent Rim Bugle

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#### BRB Information

The Bent Rim Bugle (BRB) began over 15 years ago. Back then, the Michigan DNR was on the verge of closing all state land to mountain bikes. The BRB was the means for organizing the state's off road cyclists to work for continued access.

Today the BRB still carries the torch for off road advocacy, it has become the official newsletter of the MMBA. Published quarterly, the BRB keeps the MMBA membership up to date on what's happening throughout the State.

#### Contributing articles, artwork, and photos

If it's about mountain biking, please send it in. Electronic submissions should go to [brb@mmba.org](mailto:brb@mmba.org). We prefer documents in Microsoft Word, or simple text. Photos should be in jpg format and at least 300 dpi. We can't promise everything will get published, but we'll do our best. For more information on how to submit contact [brb@mmba.org](mailto:brb@mmba.org)

#### Advertise in the BRB

The Bent Rim Bugle offers inexpensive and targeted advertising which helps with the cost of producing this cool newsletter.

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#### Additional Copies

Additional copies of the BRB can be purchased for \$3.00 each, based on availability. Contact [brb@mmba.org](mailto:brb@mmba.org).



#### Frazz Cycling Jersey

This is a very limited custom-designed Frazz premium cycling jersey made by Voler. Jef Mallet, the artist and creative genius behind the Frazz comic strip has created this one-of-a-kind jersey. And when they're gone, they're gone – because that's what our license says. Now available in women's cuts!

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# The Value of Michigan Conservation

Rachel Kuntzsch, Executive Director  
*Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy*  
& Donna Stine, Acting Executive Director  
*Michigan United Conservation Clubs*

**The time to act is now!** As Michigan policymakers work to address the state's tax restructuring needs, we must ensure that natural resource and environmental protection are considered critical to the economic renewal of this state and a priority of Michigan's citizens. Our state leaders need to hear from their constituents loud and clear that they must work on a solution to this issue now.

*Conservation and natural resource protection are directly connected to hundreds of thousands of current and potential jobs in key industries.*

Tourism – "Pure Michigan" sells the state's beauty (Great Lakes, forests, rivers, waterfalls) to attract travel dollars. In 2004, travelers to and in Michigan spent approximately \$17.5 billion, generating \$971 million in state and local taxes and accounting for 193,000 jobs statewide.

Outdoor recreation (fishing, hunting, boating)

- Michigan has more than 750,000 licensed hunters who contribute \$1.3 billion annually to our economy.
- Michigan has 2.6 million non-consumptive users who contribute \$1.2 billion to our economy.
- Michigan's licensed resident and nonresident anglers contribute \$2 billion annually to our economy.
- Michigan recreational boaters contribute \$2 billion annually to our economy.
- Michigan snowmobilers have \$1 billion annual economic impact on northern Michigan communities.
- 22 million people annually visit state parks and recreation areas.

Forest products – The Michigan forest products industry and recreational users contribute \$12 billion and 200,000 associated jobs annually to the state's economy.

*Conservation and natural resource protection are a key part of the quality of life needed to attract the knowledge industries/workers of the future.*

Studies have found that "amenities and the environment – particularly natural, recreation and lifestyles amenities – are absolutely vital in attracting knowledge workers."

Surveys of knowledge workers found that the quality of life amenities they found essential to a region included "easy access to outdoor activities" and "a clean and healthy environment and a commitment to preserving natural resources for enjoyment and recreation."

Projections show that there will be increasing demand for knowledge workers between 2005 and 2012, perhaps even recreating

the workforce shortages seen in the 1990's. "Capturing a share of America's 6 million-plus young, single, and college-educated is serious business. This group's influence is oversized because of its mobility, economic clout, and shrinking numbers. As 78 million baby boomers retire by 2020, today's 40 million 25 to 34 year olds replace them. Slightly less than 20 million of the young have a B.A. – a group 10% smaller than 10 years ago. The market for the raw material of the knowledge economy is getting tighter."

*The state budget for conservation and natural resource protection, especially general fund support, has been rapidly shrinking.*

General fund support for DNR has shrunk by two-thirds since 2000. Less than one penny of every dollar from the general fund is spent on DNR programs. (In comparison, the Department of Corrections alone receives approximately 20 percent.)

This does not reflect the expectations of Michigan citizens. In a recent statewide poll of 600 registered voters conducted for Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy:

- 72 percent were surprised to learn natural resource and environmental protection programs (including the DNR and DEQ) receive less than 1 percent of state's general fund combined.
- The average respondent estimated natural resources protection between 10 and 11 percent of the state general fund, 10 percent more than current funding levels.

*The recent Emergency Financial Advisory Panel report urges investment in natural resources and other assets as keys to renewing the state's economy.*

"Michigan is a special place, endowed with the magnificent Great Lakes, excellent higher education institutions, and superb cultural and natural offerings ... Michigan must end the disinvestment in education and those other assets that define the quality of life that knowledge-based workers seek—cultural offerings, natural resources, and vibrant cities."

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## MMBA Announces two New Directors

The MMBA State Board of Directors announces the creation and appointment of two new volunteer positions to help further our advocacy efforts.



Jason Aric Jones—Director of Advocacy

The MMBA Board recently created the Director of Advocacy position with the goal of bringing a greater level of support and communication to Trail Coordinators and local volunteers across the chapters. By having a central person acting as a hub, the hope is to create an environment for Trail Coordinators so that help is available to them both

when and how they need it. The Board appointed former MMBA President and Board member Jason Aric Jones to this position. Right now, the number one priority of the Advocacy Director (AD) position will be to facilitate both intra- and inter-organizational communication on advocacy, access, and trail construction issues.

As Director of Advocacy, Jason will Chair of the Advocacy Committee. This Committee will be comprised of all MMBA Trail Coordinators. The Committee will enhance communication on a wide array of advocacy, access and trail construction issues. Sharing knowledge and perspectives should help get Coordinators and chapters "on the same page" when it comes to organizational approach on these issues. Jason's role will be to facilitate this process, as well as, to represent the decisions of the Committee to the MMBA Board, the general membership, land managers and other relevant parties external to the organization.

Jason has indicated that it is his goal "to facilitate both process and progress on advocacy, access and trail construction issues". He wrote, "I stress that I see this position as one of facilitation, and not empowerment. As it should be, the direction of advocacy issues in the MMBA is not up to

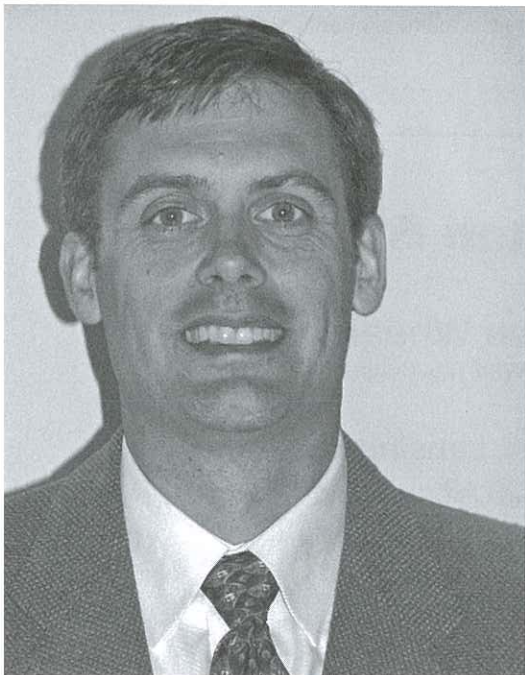
one person – rather it is up to the unified voice of the membership as represented by the Chapters, officers and board members of the organization."

He is currently starting to organize the Advocacy Committee. With that in mind, if you are a Trail Coordinator (or, a Chapter Officer with a list of Coordinators), please email him at [advocacydirector@mmba.org](mailto:advocacydirector@mmba.org) with your contact information. This will help him in getting contact info for all Coordinators.

In addition, if any member has advocacy, access or trail construction feedback, comments, questions, concerns, etc. – please share them Jason at the above address, and he will do his best to affect any issues you have with the Advocacy Committee.

Jason anticipates a lot of tangible good coming out of the Advocacy Committee in the near future. After things "get going" with the Committee, he plans to keep the membership up to date on current issues by periodically posting a "Top 10" list. This will be a list/ranking of the top 10 issues relevant to advocacy, access and trail construction that the organization, chapters and membership are trying to affect.

He looks forward to the new position and once again working on and for the behalf of the membership and Michigan mountain bikers.



John Gonway—Director of Government Affairs

Hello, everyone! I am very excited to begin my efforts with the MMBA as Director of Government Affairs to bring new trails to our bikers. It will be my goal to work with the politicians and bureaucracy involved and make sure they recognize the land stewards that we are.

It is my desire to work closely with the Director of Advocacy, Jason Jones, and the MMBA board to open new trails, coordinate advocacy with the governmental stakeholders and continue to maintain and improve the reputation of the MMBA with the politicians.

To that end, please continue to let Jason and me know what good things you have done to help with land stewardship. Our goal is political and we must not let our modesty inhibit our need to gain recognition, esteem and traction. Your efforts (at trail days, at races,

at helping others on the trail, etc.) are the powerful legs needed to make the climb; don't let it go to waste by failing to pick a good line or letting the rear wheel slip out: let us know about your contributions so that we can get traction up in Lansing and in DC. Essential to any effort is the sense of collaboration and partnership; I believe the way to deal with the local, state and national regulatory boards with jurisdiction over the trails is to forge a partnership: we cannot ask for help, we must show that we are willing to work together to meet objectives for the betterment of all users of the trail.





# MMBA Seeks New Executive Director

The Michigan Mountain Biking Association (MMBA), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is currently seeking an Executive Director. We are an advocacy driven organization working to create, maintain and protect non-motorized multi-user trails in the State of Michigan. The Executive Director (ED) will work with the State Board of Directors, various Program Directors and Volunteers to accomplish our goals as described in the MMBA Strategic Plan. We are looking for someone who has a solid understanding of running a non-profit organization and can work in a flexible and self guided environment. This is a paid position of generally twenty hours per week. Please refer to the ED Job description and visit [www.mmba.org](http://www.mmba.org) for more information. If you would like to apply, please submit a proposal outlining the qualities you would bring to the position and your vision for the role of MMBA Executive Director to [president@mmba.org](mailto:president@mmba.org). The Executive Director performs some or all of the following:

## *Leadership*

- Work with the Board of Directors in developing a vision and strategic plan to guide the organization
- Identify, assess, and inform the Board of Directors of internal and external issues that affect the organization
- Act as a professional advisor to the Board of Directors on all aspects of the organization's activities
- Foster effective team work between the Board and the Executive Director and between the Executive Director and staff (if we ever hire staff)
- In addition to the Chair of the Board, act as a spokesperson for the organization
- Conduct official correspondence on behalf of the Board as appropriate and jointly with the Board when appropriate
- Represent the organization at community activities to enhance the organization's community profile

## *Operational planning and management*

- Develop an operational plan which incorporates goals and objectives that work towards the strategic direction of the organization
- Ensure that the operation of the organization meets the expectations of its members, Board and Funders
- Oversee the efficient and effective day-to-day operation of the organization
- Draft policies for the approval of the Board and prepare procedures to implement the organizational policies; review existing policies on an annual basis and recommend changes to the Board as appropriate
- Ensure that personnel, client, donor and volunteer files are securely stored and privacy/confidentiality is maintained
- Provide support to the Board by preparing meeting agenda and supporting materials

## *Program planning and management*

- Oversee the planning, implementation and evaluation of the organization's programs and services
- Ensure that the programs and services offered by the organization contribute to the organization's mission and reflect the priorities of the Board

- Monitor the day-to-day delivery of the programs and services of the organization to maintain or improve quality
- Oversee the planning, implementation, execution and evaluation of special projects

## *Human resources planning and management*

- Determine volunteer or staffing requirements for organizational management and program delivery
  - Oversee the implementation of the human resources policies, procedures and practices including the development of job description for any staff
  - Recruit, interview and select volunteers and staff that have the right technical and personal abilities to help further the organization's mission
  - Ensure that all volunteers and staff receive an orientation to the organization and that appropriate training is provided
  - Implement a performance management process for all staff which includes monitoring the performance of staff on an on-going basis.
- Coach volunteers and staff as appropriate to improve performance

## *Financial planning and management*

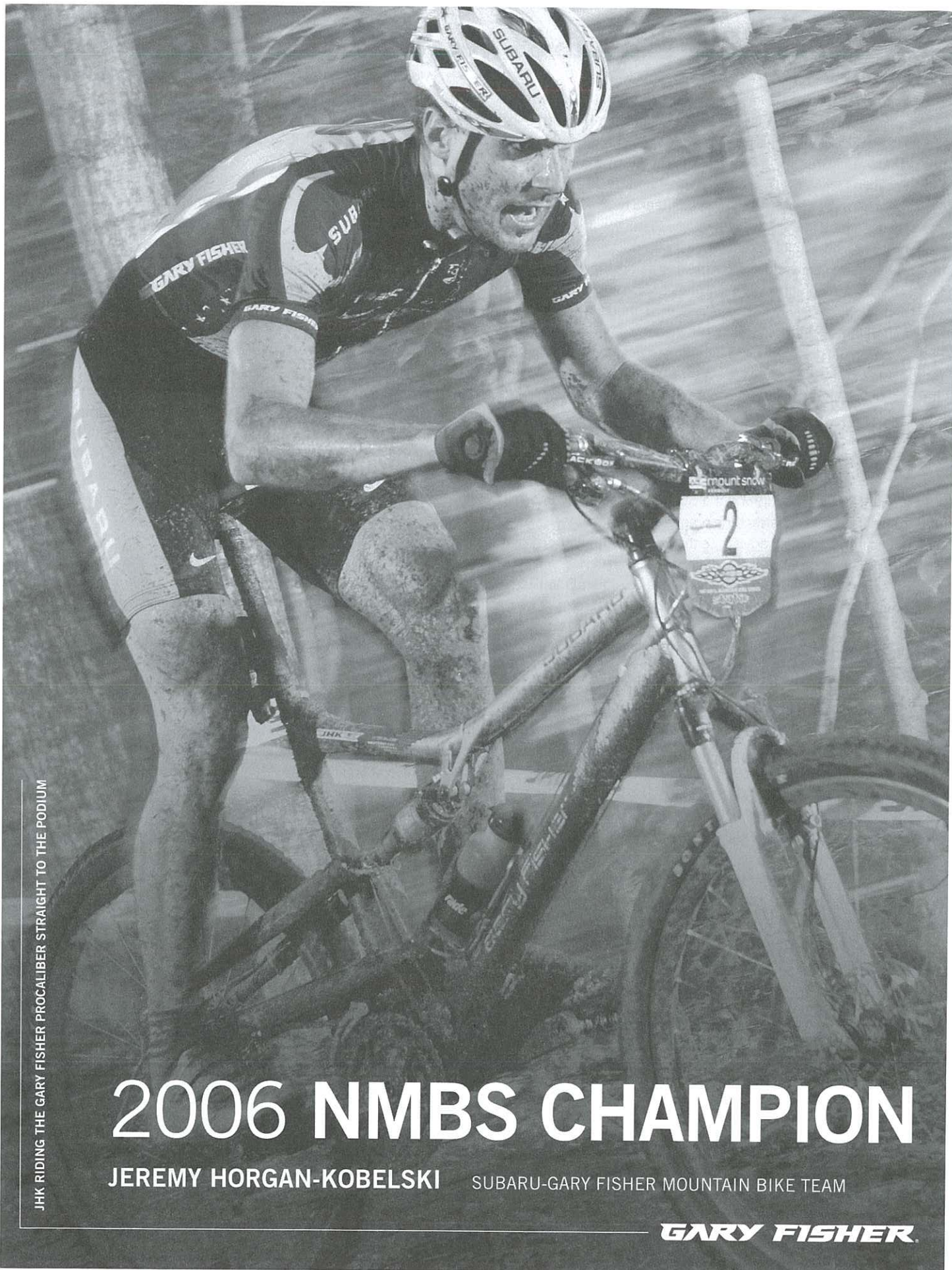
- Work with staff and the Board (Finance Committee) to prepare a comprehensive budget
- Work with the Board to secure adequate funding for the operation of the organization
- Research funding sources, oversee the development of fund raising plans and write funding proposals to increase the funds of the organization
- Participate in fundraising activities as appropriate
- Approve expenditures within the authority delegated by the Board
- In conjunction with the Treasurer, ensure that sound bookkeeping and accounting procedures are followed
- Administer the funds of the organization according to the approved budget and monitor the monthly cash flow of the organization
- Work with the Treasurer to provide the Board with comprehensive, regular reports on the revenues and expenditure of the organization

## *Community relations/advocacy*

- Work with the various volunteer positions in the MMBA to accomplish our advocacy goals.
- Attend key meetings and events to advocate for mountain biking in the State of MI.
- Communicate with stakeholders to keep them informed on the work of the organization and to identify changes in the cycling community.

Establish good working relationships and collaborative arrangements with community groups, funders, politicians, The DNR and other organizations to help achieve the goals of the MMBA.





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Time Trial

Sunday, July 29th  
Stony Creek  
Time Trial

Sunday, May 6th  
Ft. Custer Chapter Benefit  
Cross Country

Saturday, August 25th  
Maybury Chapter Benefit  
Cross Country

Sunday, June 3rd  
Hanson Hills Challenge  
Cross Country

Sunday, September 23rd  
Addison Oaks Fall Classic  
Cross Country

Saturday, July 7th  
Boyne Challenge—Marathon  
Cross Country  
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Sunday, September 30th  
Pando Challenge  
Cross Country  
20th Anniversary Race!

**More information:**  
[www.MMBA.org](http://www.MMBA.org) or [CPS@MMBA.org](mailto:CPS@MMBA.org)



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## Three Guys

Part 1 of 3 Part Series

3 guys, 3 days, 30 + hrs of riding, 300 + miles on the N.C.T - M-20 to Mackinaw

By Jeff Adamcik



Chris Maltby, Michael Seaman and Jeff Adamcik

I would have said 3 bikes but I'll talk more on that situation later. This is something I have been thinking about for a couple of years and decided to attempt over Memorial weekend with two other adventurous souls, Chris Maltby and Michael Seaman. We started off around 7:30 on a nice Friday morning from the M-20 trailhead. We were making good time until 50 miles into it when on a fast downhill a stick had caught my rear wheel tearing out 5 spokes, plus destroying my rear derailleur and hanger in the process. Luckily, I brought an extra derailleur but no spokes.

Once we got rolling again, I notice my wheel was not looking very good and my extra derailleur was having some issues. I made the decision to send the other two on their way and I would hobble in to Mesick by going north on M-37. I made it to Mesick around 5:00 p.m. with 96 miles for the day. My wife made a call to my good friend, Dave Hintz, who made the trek to Mesick to

loan me his extra bike. What can you say about a guy, who on a holiday Friday evening, drives an hour both ways just so I could continue the next day. Mike and Chris pulled in about 8:30 that night putting in 122 miles. We stayed at the Mushroom Motel that night, where they allowed us to drop bags ahead of time and Mary, the owner, even washed our biking clothes for the next day. We hit the sack after a good meal and recap of the ride. I knew the next day was going to be more of an adventure, as I hadn't pre-rode many of the sections and I wasn't proven wrong!

**Trail Notes:** This section of trail is well establish, most know this as Segments A thru E. Even the section, though less used, from Beers Road to M-115 is more than rideable. Yes, there are parts where there are no bikes allowed and you have to use your best judgment on what roads and two tracks to take at those points



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10

Summer 2007

[mma.org](http://mma.org)



# An Unfortunate Fall

By Gary Anderson – Poto Chapter member since 1992

I was finally riding some excellent single-track again at the Highland Rec. area after being away from trail riding for a month. My job took me out to Arizona (too hot for evening rides) for most of August and I had been busy with piled-up home projects the week after I returned. It felt fantastic to be riding some sweet Michigan trail again on a beautiful Labor Day morning. I could feel the lack of regular riding in my body, but my mind was good to go. My buddy and I rode the A loop, then back tracked to the D loop, then continued on the B loop, we were having a great ride! When we arrived at the C loop intersection, I debated with myself whether I felt like adding it on or did I have just enough energy to finish with B? My buddy said let's do it and I followed. About less than a half mile in I approached a slightly downhill right turn covered with rocks, I hit two that stopped my front tire dead. It was all in slow motion after that, I didn't have my weight back far enough and I could feel myself starting to endo, but I couldn't do anything about it. I should have tucked and rolled, but it all happened too quickly.

Unfortunately, I stuck my left hand out to break my fall as the rest of my body and the bike came down on top of my arm and chest. I thought that I heard a faint snapping noise and my wrist area was definitely not happy. I got up, checked my bike of course and then assessed the damage to my body. I couldn't move my wrist or fingers, especially not enough to allow me to ride out. By this time my buddy had ridden back to see what had happened to me and asked if I was alright. NOPE, was my brief and telling response, he knew that I was hurt because he had said it the same way years earlier in a bike crash that he experienced hurting his shoulder as a result. We walked back to the trail map at the intersection and noticed that Beaumont road was right near the trail and it led to Livingston road. That saved me from pushing my bike one handed on the last 2.5 miles of the B loop! Once on the road I was able to get on my bike and ride back to my buddy's van at the trailhead parking lot. By that time, the pain and swelling had gotten to an uncomfortable level while I peeled off my sweaty bike clothes

and changed. We stopped at a party store on the way home and I bought a bag of ice and a 24oz. Molson XXX to wash down some Ibuprofen.

I really wasn't sure if I had broken it or if it was just a sprain, but I sadly realized that my '06 bike season had just most likely come to an end. That bummed me out really bad. Fall is one of my favorite times of year for trail riding and I had intended on making up for not being able to ride all August by riding as much as I could until the snow flies. Oh well, so much for that.

Now I want to let you know that I've never really broken a major bone before, but I know that there's many out there in the bicycling community that have. I am typically a somewhat cautious rider; I like to go as fast as I can, but still stay in that personal safety zone to avoid getting injuries that might potentially keep me off my bike. As you can tell, I, like a majority of you, love to ride my six bikes as much as possible and average about 300 miles a month during the eight warmest ones of the year. Sorry, but I'm not a big fan of winter riding. Anyway, I've been riding regularly for 16 years now and I'm quite addicted to cycling of all kinds (except singlespeed).

Needless to say, getting injured sucks and I can't believe that it happened, but at the same time I guess that I've been really lucky that I haven't done so on the hundreds of road/trail rides I've done all over this state and country. Luckily, bones heal and I hope to be back on a bike before winter settles in and back in the saddle again full time next season.

At the risk of sounding like I'm whining, being one handed is a real challenge. I guess I'm fortunate that I broke my left arm bone instead of my right (I'm right handed) because at least I can still do most things for myself. I can't imagine not being able to do stuff you take for granted for a lifetime. It is amazing how many tasks require the use of both hands. I have learned to use my teeth a lot for tearing things open or holding small objects. You can use your thighs, body and arms to hold things, also. Your good arm has to step up and do every task needed because there isn't a helper for a while. I'm thinking of hiking the trails for the next few



months just to keep a fraction of my hard earned aerobic fitness and possibly keep it up over the winter. I bought some nice Cabela hiking boots last winter that need to be used for their intended purpose.

I've seen a few other riders get hurt over the years at Highland Recreation Area, coincidentally on or near the C loop (broken collarbone, broken leg, fatal heart attack, severe bee attack) and there is an inherent amount of danger and risk on any trail, especially this one being one of the most technical trails (and one of my personal favorites) in this area. I just thought that it wasn't going to happen to me because I'm so careful, but it goes to show that it can happen to anyone at anytime. Be careful out there, keep your weight back and I sympathize with those of you who have been injured in the past. I have heard so many broken arm stories in the last several weeks, it's incredible how many people have been there and there are many different ways to break bones.

Prognosis: Broken end of the left radius bone at the wrist. Splint/sling for a week, elbow cast for a week and then surgery at U of M in Ann Arbor. The surgeons installed a T-shaped titanium plate with ten small screws to hold the two sections together making for a much stronger bone bond and no cast, just a removable splint for six weeks. The pain the first night/next day was incredible even with the Vicodin, like someone pounding on it with a hammer! By the time you read this, I will be healed and through six weeks of physical therapy. My advice, tuck and roll baby.

Hope to see you on the trails and enjoy every ride!



# Chapter Chatter

## Metro North Chapter

The Skills Park at Stony Creek is starting to move forward. Mike Moss and Tim Dunbar have been working to begin layout of the stunts, with trail days coming up soon to start the construction. No dates have been set yet, but keep your ears/eyes open, as we will be announcing when the construction starts. Contact Mike Moss if are interested in being involved with the work.

Bloomer has a new trail coordinator. Due to time constraints, Tom Lining has decided to turn the reigns over to someone with more time, and Derek Wrathell has stepped up. So, Derek will be the new TC at Bloomer. He wants to get some work down out there this summer, so be on the lookout for announced trail days this summer.

We have dates set for our next couple meetings. The next meeting is on July 17th, probably right around the time that you should be receiving this newsletter. The next meeting will be October 16th. I hope to always have at least the next two meeting dates set, so that we can try to keep people informed as to when the meeting will be ahead of time. The meeting are held at the Rochester Mills Brewery, and we would like to thank the Rochester Mills for the donation of the meeting room for the chapter.

After much work out the Addison TC Paul Bailey, the new section that was built last year is open for riding. Paul was able to work with the Oakland County Parks to work through the issues to get the section opened in time for the 12 Hours of Addison race. If you are interested in helping out with the trail work, be sure to drop him a note, because he is always out there doing some work, and is always willing to have people help out. He may even announce a big trail day here or there on the MMBA website. Also, the DNR has installed some fences to limit where the horse traffic can go. The fences have a ~30 inch gap for bikes to pass through, but some of them are around corners, and can catch you off guard if you aren't expecting them, so heads up when you are riding the trail.

The Metro North website is up and running. Big thanks for David Moore for getting everything setup for us, and to Martha Shue

for doing much of the web work. We'll try to keep the site updated with dates for upcoming meetings, trail days, and events, news about the happenings around the chapter, and the agendas and minutes from the meetings.

Metro North chapter is also in need of a CPS Representative. If you are interested in helping out the chapter and the MMBA CPS, and have the time to commit to working with the committee, please contact Nick Shue.

## Metro South Chapter

I would like to start by giving a HUGE "THANKS" to all the Metro South TC's and all the great volunteers that helped groom and cut new trail at all the past trail daysthat occurred in April. Without all of your dedication the great trails we enjoy would not be a reality. If you want an example of the fine work you all do just glance through the forums at how people are praising all the chages at all of our trails and how much they are enjoying them. If that doesn't make you feel proud then nothing will. So please spread the word about the MMBA to anyone you get a chance to and tell them what we do for the great sport and encourage them to join us.  
Hockeydaddy

### MMBA Metro South Chapter meeting minutes 5/14/07

Ground Round, Livonia 6:30 pm

Approval of Minutes

General updates on trails, TC's, trail days and activities

Attentance

Justin Applegate	Joe Foy
Steve Balogh	Bill Hermann
Claudia Bean	Edward Hug
Frank Bean	Loren Konkus
Cris Cataldo	Dave Poirer
Dave Cox	David Sterling
Wendy Cox	Jennifer Sterling
Matt Dughi	Larry Verna
Mike Flack	Ted Welsh

Hickory Glen/Commerce- TC Open- Justin Applegate is acting interim TC and is considering the TC position (will know before next meeting); Jeff Shotwell, Assistant TC. Trail in good shape.

Highland - TC, Bob Spleet. No report

Hines Park - TC, Mike Flack/ The Beans (Frank and Claudia) are Co-Assistant TC's. In contact with Wayne County parks- to put in trails in easements to go in and out- Dave Robins. Incorporate Holiday Park group- Bill Craig is in that user group. Meetings to be set in the coming weeks.

ILRA - John Burt- TC. The demo loop has part of what may be incorporated into the trail. Still working on the collarbone hill reroute. The log pile that is not sturdy on yellow should be reviewed (after the first big grinder on yellow).

Lakeshore Park/Novi - TC, Dave Cox. Trail in good shape. Trail day successful. Some reroutes done, IMBA standard non fault line climb and pump track work with some future tweaking. New monster log pile before crater; one can do both! New skinny after crater. Freeriders like the trail along with the cross country riders. Stunts are spread out along the trail, not clustered in the middle.

Maybury - TC, Dave Poirer. Luba was pleased with the winter trail, so she may recommend the whole trail be opened next winter. Bike racks may be put in. New section will be flagged to increase it; it is over 6.2 miles long now. New section opened is accessible near Beck Road entrance to bring it to 7 miles. The land manager approved all the kiosks. Kiosk and possible new parking lot at Beck entrance is long term goal. There is a tool shed that can be used to house Metro South Tool Shed.

Milford - TC, Bill Herrman. Event on June 9th for 5 trails- 7-90 miles; very little road usage. O'Callihan's will host riders after.

Munson - TC, Scott Goocher. No report

Proud Lake - TC, Bill Hermann. Connector to attach to Commerce and ILRA.

Rouge Park - TC- Open Buddy system between Chris Fry, Matt Dughi and Joe Foy will act as interim co-TC's. It is very muddy, so we may need to call Rouge a seasonal trail for Memorial Day opening. The loop will be completed by fall 2007.

Trail committee - Interim acting Dave Cox



and Mike Flack Trail School, Dan Harrison will step down, so we need a new coordinator. Dates need to be set for 101 and 102.

#### Freeride committee

Matt Dughi wants to do a freeride session. Drop the seats and out on the platforms, and go straight to the stunts - BARF at the FARM- Become a Radical Freerider. Date to be set- tentative- June 10th at NOON!

#### Races - Maybury and Lakeshore

Maybury - August 25th. Race committee will meet soon. Team liaison, kids awards, swag, money, prizes; the money used last year does not exist this year. \$1500 used towards and \$6,000 made. 85% were sport or beginner last year.

Lakeshore - July 15th, registration is open. Same format as last year. 80 people in 2006, 20 teams, awards were a hit. Profits will go to pay for the race and Farm improvements. Broke even in 2006, profit went to the BMX person who was injured.

#### Other Chapter events for 2007

Ride of Silence - 6:30 5/16 at Nankin Mills, leave at 7 pm. No sheriff support this year. So, we obey the traffic laws.

June 28th- fireworks ride in Detroit or Milford

MMBA Advocacy Director - position open- Lansing liaison, inventory across chapters, maintain DNR relationships. Two candidates right now. Want larger pool.

Web site- Frank Bean is Web Site coordinator for the Metro South Web site; he will liaison with financial reporter.  
FAFL- TBA

Financial Report - Metro South/North split funds all settled.

Balance as of 3/6/07 \$7423.19  
Payments

1. Gift for Todd Scott \$800.00
2. Trail Day Maybury \$53.38
3. Trail Day Novi \$79.49
4. Dues- Friends of Maybury- \$15.00
5. Stamps- \$ 7.02
6. Locks/clasps/bolts/keys \$29.09
7. Tools- Maybury \$42.34
8. Trail Day Commerce \$54.04

Deposits

1. Metro South/North Split \$1199.70
2. Milford Race funds \$150.00

a. Total \$410 Restricted funds Milford

3. MMBA qrtly payout \$123.20

4. Restricted funds Rouge \$4500

Total funds in account \$ 7815.73

Other items

Trail Tool trailer needed. Restricted funds can be used from Rouge to buy tools.

Signage for Metro South Signs. Better feel, more consistent feel, better for riders, but should use. "sponsored by..." versus "built by."

Hans asked for article submissions.

#### Next Meetings

Monday, August 6th and November 5th 6:30 PM GR Livonia

Respectfully submitted,

Claudia Bean

AKA Froggyrider

Joe(Hockeydaddy)

Team Tree Farm

MMBA

#### Mid State Chapter

Trail construction is continuing at Bennett Park in Charlotte. The trail crew over there has done an excellent job of laying in a good amount of trail in a short period of time.

There is still more to layout though and the trail definitely needs to be ridden to help break it in, so go ride it! If you come across Marty or Scott out there thank them for all the hard work they have put forth so far.

The 11th annual Hare Racer happened May 12 th at Heritage Park in Adrian. This was probably one of the best turn outs I have seen in the past few years. The kids races were packed in each age group. Adrian Parks & Rec. did an excellent job with the event along with Gregg, Todd and the others for setting up the course and maintaining the trails.

Adrian Locksmith & Cyclery was on hand just in case anyone needed mechanical assistance. They also brought out a few Giant demo bikes for everyone to check out. You can check out their store at 611 N. Main St. Adrian, MI 49221 or give them a call at 517-263-1415.

On Sunday April 29<sup>th</sup>, we held the annual mid-state picnic at Burchfield Park. The turnout was much better than we had anticipated. There were probably 40+ riders there throughout the day. We also had a fleet of

Specialized demo bikes there courtesy of Denny's Central Park Bicycles. You can check his shop out at 1805 Central Park Dr. Okemos, MI 48864 or give him a call at 517-349-8880.

#### Poto Chapter

Summer is here and things are growing quickly. Will will be holding workdays at all of our Chapter's trails this summer. Check the MMBA website for dates and times. We will have weekly Monday 6:30 PM workdays in Ann Arbor on the local trails. Chris Heschels, the new Trail Coordinator for Brighton, has been doing an incredible job this year. If you haven't made it out to Brighton this year I would highly recommend it. You'll be pleasantly surprised. The Poto will continue to improve as we check off the list of projects that our TC David Welsh has put together. If you want to learn more come join us at our next Chapter meeting on July 25th.

If you can't make an official workday, you can still help by putting some hand snips in your jersey pocket and snipping a face slapper branch once in a while. It only takes a second and if even a fraction of our members did it once a month it would add up quickly. Give it a shot, it will be much appreciated!

#### Northern Chapter

##### Copper Harbor Happenings

Volunteers have been working to clear and groom the Copper Harbor trails from winter's deadfall. The trails have been mostly dry and have provided some excellent early season riding conditions. Plans include having the 25+ mile trail network 100% open following the National Trails Day work session on June 2. Sunday afternoon trail work sessions are being planned weekly at noon from June 24 -August 26...volunteers with a strong back and a weak mind are always welcome!

The Copper Harbor Trails Club kicked off the 2007 season by hosting the 1<sup>st</sup> annual "Tour 'da Keweenaw" road bike ride, with an option for an 82,44 or 20 mile route on May 19. Mother Nature was a detriment to the ride's attendance, with rain, sustained wind and high temps in the upper 30's, although a small number of die-hards still did the ride. The Tour was followed with a dinner at the Harbor Haus restaurant, which is considered by many to be one of the best restaurants in the entire U.P., and was well attended. Both



the Tour and the dinner were a fundraiser to benefit the CH Club and the mountain bike & hiking trails in Copper Harbor. Despite the raw weather, support and enthusiasm for the trails is high and it is likely that a second annual will occur in 2008!

Thursday night group rides are underway for the season and will continue weekly through the end of September. Folks should meet at the Keweenaw Adventure Company in "downtown" Copper Harbor at 6:00pm (est) and plan on a 2-3 hour social "tour" of the CH singletrack and surrounding back-country trails. Most rides typically attract intermediate & advanced-type riders, with a good mix of locals and visitors to the area. A traditional apres' ride session of food and drink typically follows at the Mariner North.

Plans are in motion for the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Copper Harbor Fat Tire Festival on Sunday September 2. Michigan's northern-most mountain bike race is truly an event like no other. Not part of any point series and with no major prize money at stake, the event is intended to be a good time in this end of summer gathering of the mountain bike tribe. The 23 & 13-mile XC races will begin with a laid-back Copper Harbor mass start, with a 2:00pm roll out. Don't let the relative short distances fool you as many consider

this to be perhaps the most challenging race course in all of the Midwest, with long grueling climbs and steep, sustained, technical descents...about two thirds of the course is singletrack! The "Jr. Fat Tire" kids race for kids 13 & under will begin at 12:30pm, prior to the main event. The races will finish in Grant Twp Park and riders will then be treated with a cookout, great prizes, social time and a double header of live music to take the Festival into the night time hours... back by popular demand are U.P. favorites Chasin' Steel (bluegrass) and the Mojo Perry Band (electric, psychedelic, blues/rock). Folks should plan to spend the night! Early registration price breaks are available on-line at [www.keweenawadventure.com](http://www.keweenawadventure.com) On-site registration is on Saturday September 1 from 1:00-3:00 and on race day from 11:00-1:00. More info at (906)289-4303. Info on lodging and area attractions at [www.copperharbor.org](http://www.copperharbor.org)

Sam Raymond

### Southwest Chapter

The day after our Fort Custer Stampede, one of the contestants created the e-mail below. It is so nice to hear an opinion about our local trails from another part of the country. Tim raced Sport Men 30-34 and placed fourth.

*Subject: fort custer event*

*Date: Mon, 7 May 2007 04:10:04 +0000*  
*hi dennis,*

*i'm not sure if you are directly connected with mmba, but i have cc'ed their info email in this email.*

*first, as you may remember, i was visiting some family in michigan and came to do the fort custer xc (i had emailed you about the schedule and course description before coming). as a xc racer from southern california, i was really hoping to find a good event to race during my visit. fort custer was perfect.*

*first, on saturday, i made the trip out to yankee springs for a training ride and to dial in my bike - i've read and hear lots about this area. it was beautiful. the trails are so well taken care of - they're clean, well maintained, plenty of parking at the staging area. i was amazed. i kept riding the smaller "warm up loop" after the larger loop - even though i was out of time and had to get back. while packing up my bike, i chatted with a ranger who spoke very highly of mmba, and said if it were not for them, yankee would not be there.*

*fort custer race was just as great. that was just a great course. southern california riders dream about trails like that - so many trees, moist soil instead of hot rocks and sand - and single track! our races almost always involve large amounts of fire roads. i was laughing when i had to cross the stream! it really was a beautiful course, and i enjoyed it so much i could have gone a few more laps. It was one of those races that you just don't want to end!*

*thanks to everyone for putting on a great event, and for the work you/mmba does with the trail advocacy. michigan riders are very lucky to have such great riding here. i'll be back for this one next year.*

*tim vangilder*

*ps if you know someone who should get this at mmba, please forward it to them.*

On behalf of all Michigan Mountain Bikers I thank you for your kind testimonial. I never skip the short loop at Yankee myself.

I would like to thank the Participants of the Stampede as well. Without you the trails



*Photo by Todd Scott*

DNR Director Becky Humphries (c) poses with Nate Phelps (l) and Rick Plite (r) of the MMBA Western Chapter at Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance meeting in Lansing.



would be very much different. For the second consecutive year the post race cleanup did not include litter left behind on the trails. Thank you volunteers. Even if your contribution seems small, it is important. And thank you sponsors. Your participation not only benefits the trails, it allows everyone a fond memory of the day.

Chapter volunteer of the year nominee is Charlie Swain. It takes many volunteers like Charlie to set aside time to give up a part of their personal lives to plan and organize an event. Charlie organizes the water station. He shows up every year with the cups, table, jugs, trash bags, and water. Sometimes a volunteer has to restructure their personal calendar and put off important things. Things like doctors appointments. Charlie performed his duties perfectly even though he wasn't feeling so chipper. In fact he was pale, white as a ghost, so to speak. The hospital added 3 units of O Pos and kept him a few days until the bleeding stopped. Charlie has a new diet and has almost recovered. He hopes to back on his bicycle soon. Atta boy Fella. We can count on you.

Xterra Triathlon comes to Fort Custer. Hard working chapter volunteers were on hand for course marshalling and guide dog services for the day. Elite Endeavors knows the value of having qualified local volunteers on hand in case of emergency. That was not the case last summer when another promoter held an event at the Fort and had a difficult time hooking up emergency responders with an injured person. Here is a portion of the letter from Jim and Joyce Donaldson of Elite Endeavors.

The fellows from MMBA were great as well, as ambassadors for the race as well as the park, and it was just one Great day! The weather cooperated, and everyone stayed for the lunch/awards and had a great time. After clean up at transition, several of us took a bit of time to have fun, rode the trails, making sure they were clean, then went home tired and happy!

Thank you Jim, Joyce, and the participants. We appreciate your contribution to our chapter and the trails of Fort Custer. Thank you Amy, Gordie, Paul, Cathy, Tom, Rick, Robin, Joe, and Sharon.

Tom Owens and I traveled to the Poto for the Leave No Rider Behind Ride. I think we

were both surprised by the limited turnout. The Poto is always a fun ride and the Bar B Que afterward was great. Don't miss out on the next MMBA ride.

Mike Needham

### Western Chapter

Thanks to all that have helped out, attended, spread the word, worked on western chapter events. It has been a busy Spring. It's behind us now and it's time to enjoy the Summer. The only events we are looking into over the Summer are chapter camp outs. Look for more info in the Summer mailing of the chapter newsletter. Until then here is a quick run down of what has happened or will be happening at a few of our trails.

nate phelps- president, western

### Yankee

- Special thanks to Tim, Martin, Dennis, Jason M, and Sue for promoting a very successful time trail. The resulting decision for the chapter to continue to promote our event is a no-brainer.
- The use study for Yankee concludes this Fall. Martin and Tim are moving forward with a trail expansion plan to submit as a part of the study.

### Hungerford

- Approval has been gained to install new yellow signage
- 1<sup>st</sup> leg of the major reroute is completed, but for now not open
- Work will continue thru out the summer, with a major trail day on Oct 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Welcome to Seth Higgins- Seth is a FSU student that has been working with us on the trail.

### Game Area

- Kudos to TC Chris Curtis for opening dialogue with DNR and resulting ability to perform trail work.
- The first two re-routes are in place.
- Site of National Trail Day focus. Clean up of the 3 mile mini dump, bridge rebuilding, and 4th section entry.

### Ski Area

- Two new sections opened.
- Starting to mark for a stacked loop system
- Welcome new TC assistant Mike Cramer, Cramer basically lives across the street from the Ski Area and will be taking on an active role.

### Bass River

- TC Tom Landry and crew continue to improve the low lying 4<sup>th</sup> section
- Use study completes this Fall and trail expansion is being considered

### Owassippie

- TC Bryan Meyers and West Coast Riders have worked hard to improve trail markings. A new map is available in the trail guide.
- Remember the Scout Camp is open during the summer and the trail is closed from June 15-Aug 17.

### Big M

- Formation of Friends group last year- conglomeration of trail users- mtb, trail runners, and xc-skiers. Headed by MMBA member Ken Blakey-Shell.
- Friends of Big M group has met with MNFS trail coordinator Brian Belt
- Ken has met with the MNFS to appraise trail re-routes.

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# One Who Makes Footsteps Across the Sky

By Jay Jones

When I first heard this name I was awestruck and it instantly took me to a time and a place almost 2 summers ago.

The place is northern lower Michigan, my buddy Tony Misovski and I are riding the North Country Trail and it's some of the sweetest ribbons of single track that I have ever had the privilege to be on.



The sky is overcast with at least four shades of grey and a light steady rain had just begun to fall as we neared our destination after a three and a half hour drive. This pristine trail meanders through the hills of the Manistee National forest along the Manistee River and its part of the North Country Trail system. The majority of the trail goes along a 200 foot ridge that tags along the river, it weaves in and out following the contour of the flowing water giving the trail the character for which we drive hours to be a part of.

This day we start our ride at the Marilla Trailhead parking lot. We pay our fee, put our little white piece of paper on the dash of our car to signify we are indeed the paying customers we claim to be. We double check our gear and make sure we have everything we need and set off!

Well into our ride I notice that the light rain and wind direction have caused the trees to be wet only on one side and the rest of the forest floor darkened and more vibrant in color. In the midst of the trees being dark on one side and their normal dry light color on the other it has given them a sense of a 3-dimensional being. Not in the sense of totally alive, but as in a spirit....the spirits of many and once again I am transported back in time.

But this time is long ago...long before our grandmothers and grandfathers were here. It is a time when just the Ojibwa, the Potawatimi, and the Odawa roamed this land. They lived off the land moving from one place to another with the change of the season. This day in my mind, the trees were the spirits of those who have gone before us and I am moving along side them, for I am an Ojibwa Indian.

Where we ride was not a place of dwelling, but a place of movement, just like me and Tony. Most of the Indian villages in the 1600's and earlier were near the mouths of major rivers where they empty into one of the great lakes that surround Michigan. These locations provided everything they needed, food, shelter and water. Other rivers like the one we follow were used for transportation, getting from winter camp to the summer camp. As I speed down the trail I catch myself looking at these trees as if they were people. Men, women and children walking, laughing and carrying everything



they owned, free to move from the hot circular winds of the south to the cooler breezes of the Mackinac Straights and Lake Superior. Free to move about to the small bays where whitefish are abundant and free to go where the fresh sustaining water flows. Ironically, I have just paid a small fee to do what my ancestors did without restraint.

The Europeans came to this land fleeing from tyranny and for some, to find a place to express their religious beliefs freely. The British and French were first and battles were fought as early as the mid to late 1600's in what is now New York and Ontario Canada. Then in the late 1700's they pushed the tribes like the Delaware, the Shawnee and others more eastward to the Ohio River valley. With their slow incursion they steal the land and lively hood of the many tribes that had occupied this area for hundreds of years.

As I labor up a long climb on a one-and-a-half-foot wide piece of single track my mind is once again diverted. Their lives were so simple yet so hard, just like my single speed mountain bike; with one gear taking me wherever I need to go, my simple life style emulating those who have traveled here so long ago. Did they suffer as I have on this ride, did they laugh as I have laughed with my good Macedonian friend? I'm sure they did, as with all adventures there is the good and the not so good. With Tony calling my attention to a particular part of the trail I am brought back to the present again.

We come to an overlook where you can see eastward for miles until you can not see anymore, to the line that separates the earth from the sky. Eastward, the direction from which the European invasion comes from. Some like Pontiac, an Ottawa chief

and leader who lived on what is now the Detroit River has seen eastward and the turmoil it brings. In 1763 he devises a plan with neighboring tribes to stop this invasion, for what they see, they do not agree with. First the British have changed the rules and create new laws of an already agreed upon fair trading commerce with the French. Second, the poor attitude towards the Indians and thirdly and probably most important of all, the mind set of the Europeans literally taking over the entire nation. With Pontiac's war, the hostilities spread far and wide taking many lives of natives and the whites.

Others like Pontiac will soon follow, their ideals the same as the great leaders and visionaries before them, one being Pa~shik~ka~shik~ques~cum/The One Who Makes Footsteps Across the Sky. Just the saying of his name causes a great stirring within my soul. The name holding the power of a leader to whom it belongs, someone who would bear the load for which the great ones carry.

Pa~shik~ka~shik~ques~cum was an Ojibwa chief with seven under chiefs, a medicine man and my mothers great-great-great grandfather.

He vehemently opposed the Christianity movement as it stripped from him all that he believed. For what the Europeans searched for, freedom of speech, freedom of worship, this was not granted to those who have lived here before their arrival, the white's contradictory actions confusing those who they first helped.

As I scream down a long hill my hands tired from holding the brake levers I must concentrate on the task at hand. I can not look to my left or to my right to see my brothers

and sisters who I ride with, I can not see their camp fires that warmed them in the night, I can only feel their presence carry me over the rocks and the roots strewn about, bringing me safely to the bottom. With each mile I go and the day wearing on, the trees start to lose their impression of being that they possessed earlier. The sun warms the air and the moisture fades away along with the spirits of the many that have gone before me.

I can not help but be in awe of the possibility of my tire tracks covering the same earth that they walked upon. I now ride trails named Pontiac Lake, after the great chief Pontiac, the Owasippe and the Potawatomi and I speculate on the things that went through their minds. Did they wonder if their way of life would soon be stolen? Did they question if their existence would disappear, forever erasing a whole nation? Or did they just concern themselves with the simple movement of making winter camp before the cold north wind creeps upon their backs?

Their footsteps next to my tire tracks, footsteps of laughing children, caring women and strong men! Footsteps of the families where the grandparents taught the young one and both were honored to be a part of it, families where everything was shared, food, clothing and shelter. Footsteps upon Mother Earth, where it is believed by the Ojibwa that we are here for a short time and that the Earth is not ours to own, but to borrow.

Footsteps that will be with me forever, footsteps flowing within my blood, carrying on the traditions...just like the One Who Makes Footsteps Across the Sky.

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## Revolution Bikes Opens in East Lansing

Revolution Bikes, LLC is located at 420 Albert Street, which is on the north side of the multi-colored parking structure in the heart of East Lansing. They can be reached at 517-908-0282.

After months of preparation their doors are now open. Check out their collection of KHS bicycles and accessories to keep you rolling. With over a decade of experience Revolution Bikes can find the casual commuter or the high-end racer the perfect bike or part to meet your needs.

With gas prices and temperatures rising stop by and let them show you how easy bike commuting can be.

---

## New Bike Shop in Dearborn

Adventure Bicycle is now open at 3606 Monroe Street, Dearborn, Michigan. Their phone number is 313-274-2828.

The store owner, Clayton Hatchard, has been in the cycling industry for over eight years.

Adventure Bicycle is a family friendly store that stocks Cannondale, Schwinn and GT mountain bikes as well as road bikes, comfort bikes and kids bikes.

Adventure Bicycle offers MMBA members a 10% discount on anything in the store.



# La Ruta De Los Conquistadores or How to Spend Your Honeymoon in Costa Rica—Part One

By Jochen Faber



Jochen Faber

La Ruta represented always the ultimate challenge I wanted to face since I first heard about the race back in 1998. I read all the articles I could find on the Net and scanned

through all the pictures previous racers had posted over the years. "Not just a race, a personal growth journey" Roman Urbina advertises his creation, rated as the world's

toughest MTB race. What to expect and how to train for something like this?

We decided this year to do La Ruta as our honeymoon, tropical destination, rainforest, exotic jungles, volcanoes, beaches, and a MTB race, what else can you ask for to celebrate your wedding?

We printed the 3 day stages from the website ([adventurerace.com](http://adventurerace.com)), profiles and distances, and started calculating... The first thing that comes to mind by looking at the elevation profiles are the mountain stages of the Tour de France. There are in essence 30,000 feet of climbing with a distance of 210 miles, broken in 3 days. All this is elevated by rather aggressive time check points you need to make throughout the day, if you miss one, you are done for that day. Now there is no time for dilly-dallying, no camera stops possible, they are not fooling around. How many Poto's do we need to ride to get the climbing in?

Weeks before the race Diane started to research the 32 female competitors (out of 500 registered racers), just for giggles. 90% seemed to be either world renowned mountain bike champions, Ironman level triathletes or adventurer-race goddesses, many with personal web-sites or stat sheets to proof their worthiness to attempt such a race. The more she researched, the more she doubted her own abilities to even attempt La Ruta.

As the race moved closer, and the preparations ran at full speed, the intimidation factor started to give way to the excitement. There were tools to organize and test out, spare parts to be sourced, energy food to be tasted and purchased, bikes to be given their final tune up and blessing. The decision was made to take the bikes with us instead of shipping them ahead of time to ensure their arrival. To our surprise the bikes ended up costing nothing on US Air as it was considered international luggage.

So once packed we left cold Michigan on Wednesday morning, Detroit – Charlotte, NC – San Jose, Costa Rica. It is the rainy season in Costa Rica, there was so much rain surrounding the airport, the pilot had to make a second approach because he couldn't see



the runway. Always a scary moment when you know the landing gear is out and the ground is only a few feet away and you hear the engines howl to climb out again. But we eventually landed, the bikes and luggage arrived, in the curbside chaos we organized a "taxi" looking van that brought us to the Hotel Irazu in San Jose. "Tinker arrived this morning", the young tip-hungry kid smiled, as he held out his hand for his well deserved bike box schlepping duties...

We put together the bikes, there was a perfect long carpeted hallway outside the room to run through the gears and make the final adjustment. It was pouring rain outside, super humid, like in the worst Michigan summer months, and some 80 degrees. But at least there were palm trees right outside the window, gotta have your palm trees. In the lobby we ran into Tinker, Cannondale baseball cap and all. What an honor to meet the man, the legend, the myth. He is so super nice and down to earth, what a true champion. More and more racers arrived and instinctually you start to check out the competition (bad habit, as you realize there is no competition, we are the tourists from Michigan, they are the athletes to kick ass.)

Aside from the Ironman racer from Hawaii on the next table bragging about her training schedule we had a quiet dinner, beans and rice, something we would see a lot of in the coming days.

The next morning we loaded the bikes on a truck, and boarded some luxury busses to be transported to the race starting town of Jaco. We had a funny local guide on the bus entertaining us and telling us all about Costa Rica. A snack stop and a stop to see some massive crocodiles later we arrived at the Jaco Beach Resort on the Pacific coast, incredible humidity and super hot, but sunny and palm trees.

We went through the registration process and managed to get a short ride in before it started to downpour again. And when it rains in Costa Rica, it rains, I mean cats and dogs, or better lizards and frogs...

We ate some excellent pasta in Jaco and returned to the hotel, trying to get a good night sleep (which in prior nights did elude us). "Unless it rains so hard that we cannot see the hand in front of us we will go at 5:15am sharp" Roman announced at the

official welcome ceremony.

Breakfast started at 3am... and there they were, 500 suited up racers, ready to conquer the jungle, stuffing their faces with rice and beans, eggs, fruits, and stashes of secret make-me-go-faster goodies. We started lining up around 5am, still dark. You can feel the excitement in the air, tons of colorful jerseys from all over the world, thousands of last minute well wishes, last minute tire pressure checks, slaps on shoulders, hugs and tears. It is going to be a good day, you could see no cloud in the barely lit sky.

5:15am on a Friday, when most of the world is still asleep, we pushed hard on our pedals and made it through the starting gate, wow,



Diane

La Ruta, here we come.

For the first day we have 14,500 feet of climbing and 60 miles in front of us, a difficult day for any rider. 14,500 feet means nothing to a rider from Michigan, you have absolutely no relation to elevation, where do you train for something like this, and how do you compare 14,500 feet. The Sears Tower in Chicago is 1,450 feet tall, so 10 times the Sears Tower, seems like an acceptable number.

The course starts out on blacktop, leading away from the beach towards some obvious hills, the blacktop turns to a smooth dirt road, then to a rougher dirt road, then to a boulder infested gravel trail up the first 2,100 foot climb, so steep and loose on occasion that even some of the motocross rider accompanying us get their rigs stuck. So there is a lot of pushing/carrying your bike up these first steep slopes, and you suddenly realize you are not in Kansas (Michigan) anymore. You are surrounded by a tropical rainforest, with wild vegetation, all kind of strange critter sounds, and as the sun comes up you feel the humidity and the temperature rising with ever step you take. Sometimes at a big bend you see a glimpse of the riders in front of you, way up there, and as you turn around, you see riders way

below you thinking the same thing. Some sections are absolutely rideable, steep, but rideable. There is a helicopter hovering in the distance, they are making a movie, and plenty of camera staff on the side of the mountain trying to catch your agonizing expressions clearing 2,100 feet of mountain. Finally you arrive at the peak, the view is amazing, the distant ocean over the green jungle, but no time to waste, the 1st checkpoint is still a few miles out and you have to be there by 8am or else.

(Continued on page 21)



# Dental Expectations

By Thumb Shifter

Perfect teeth aren't really necessary for mountain biking, but before I started riding they were all I had. My teeth were perfect, not a cavity in my entire head, a fact which made a trip to the dentist a bragging rite of sorts for me. They were the only physical asset I could really count on. Unlike most people I could look forward to a trip to the dentist. I received no admonishing lectures, but instead I was praised for what they assumed was my fastidiousness. I was hardly going to disappoint Dr. Havisham or Ellen, my hygienist, with the truth: I took oral hygiene no more seriously than anything else in my lethargic life. As for the rest of my body I had had no great expectations, until a friend talked me into mountain biking. Although I thought I would die at first, I actually had fun, and before I knew it I had been tricked into rescinding a lifetime of leisure that had sculpted a perfectly flabby and overweight body.

I had spent the whole spring and summer living on sports drinks, energy bars and cycling in an attempt to resemble someone that hadn't spent the last ten years of their life on a couch. And while I'm no medical expert I am smart enough to do basic math: more calories burned in the body than eaten by the body equals less body. It may have been the only formula for success that that ever worked for me. Now 25 pounds lighter, I had more than good teeth, and on my way to my last appointment with Dr. Havisham. I wondered if the new look would get any response from Ellen.

While I was waiting in the lobby I thumbed through a stack of the trade journal *Popular Dentistry*, strategically placed there to inform clients that dentists other than Dr. Havisham were fanatically obsessed with brushing and flossing. I had no real intention of reading any of the articles, but just

flipping through a few issues and looking at the pictures made me feel that I was taking my oral hygiene more seriously than the other patients in the lobby. Among the issues there were cover stories promoting the celebrity elite of dentistry, and I thought perhaps I should have a dentist of that stature. The feature articles had titles like, "When Extraction isn't Enough", "Pain Management for You and Your Clients", "To Drill or Not to Drill: New Uses for the Enamel Laser." And then there was a cover with a mountain biker promoting an article entitled "Are Sports Drinks Worth the Risk?" I should never have ever looked at that magazine.



Having read only the introduction I began to think of ways to sneak out of the office. Usually I'm pretty good with excuses, but I was too preoccupied with the disaster cycling had made of my mouth to come up with an acceptably creative excuse to leave. The article, at least from the introduction, explained how a dentist turned scientist or scientist turned dentist, I wasn't sure which, had simulated months of exposure to different beverages, including sports drinks, by leaving extracted teeth in various beverages. Duh, soda is going to cause the teeth to rot, I thought, but the article claimed exposure to sports drinks was even worse than soda. I may have lost a lot of weight, I was in great shape, and I felt better than ever, but what had I done to my perfect teeth. I didn't need an excuse. I decided then and there I would just leave and get a new dentist, one that had no expectations of

my formerly perfect teeth. Just as I stood to leave, Ellen caught me.

"Wow, Phil, you look great," she said with an expression of surprise and delight. I had always thought of her as a woman out of my league, and I'd never seen such interest in her eyes before. No way was I leaving now. "Well sit down and tell me how you did it," she said inviting me into an exam room. Of course I followed her direction. "You look like you've been living at the gym." She was impressed and in no hurry to get started on my teeth. All too glad to delay the inevitable, I told her about the past six months in detail, the new bike, the new friends, the new body that came with riding a hundred miles a week and even how I had competed in a few races.

"Well, Dr. H. will hardly recognize you," and I agreed thinking of my teeth not the rest of me. I was glad to actually have a conversation with her in which I wasn't limited to humming yes or no responses past metal instruments inspecting or scraping or polishing my teeth, but I didn't tell her the whole story—I left out the part about my diet that consisted of little more than sports drinks and energy bars. Eventually Dr. Havisham checked in on us and curtly reminded Ellen that she had other clients. My delaying tactic had run its course.

As she took her first look into my mouth I realized how people with regular teeth felt at a dental appointment, and it justified every hurtful thing I'd ever heard about dentists. Ellen made a few hummings as she worked, but her usual one-sided chatting was absent. Perhaps she was just working fast to keep from delaying other appointments, but I believed she was suddenly revolted and wanted to get away from my hideous teeth for fear that they might be contagious. I was impressed by her attempt to be professional and cover her judgment of me, but I could see it in her eyes. She was working fast just to be rid of me. When she finished she stepped out of the exam room to retrieve Dr. Havisham or rather to inform her what a disappointment I was.

Ellen returned with the dentist and said, "Dr. H. take a look at Phil, you'd hardly recognize



him.” That’s for sure. My once perfect set of teeth were now in ruins, and for what? Vanity. Had I not gotten on that bike with the ridiculous idea to get in shape and befriend people obsessed with fitness, I would still have my perfect teeth. Sure Ellen had cleaned them, but they were still rotten—barely hanging there in my head by their withering roots. As she sat next to me I felt Judgment coming.

“Well now, Phil, lost some weight have we, that’s nice,” said the dentist somewhat less impressed that her young assistant. Ellen had tipped her off, and she knew just what to expect inside my cavity-riddled head. As Dr. Havisham began to reach for my mouth with her latex covered fingers I had to stop her. I had to confess. “Wait, stop. I didn’t know.”

“Didn’t know what?” She asked backing away from my teeth looking concerned.

I explained to her how I read the article in the lobby, and how I’d been living on sports drinks and energy bars for months. But I didn’t stop there, I confessed everything: Telling her that I rarely flossed, and that I didn’t even brush after lunch. “I’ve ruined them, haven’t I?”

“Do you mean the Iowa Beverage Study? That’s just one guy’s opinion. You didn’t read the whole article, did you? Sure the headline is scary, but really Phil I’m sure your teeth are just fine. That study hasn’t linked all these new sports snacks directly to cavities.” Ellen was standing in the doorway and they both had a laugh at my foolishness. She was right, my teeth were still perfect, but now they knew the truth behind them—nothing but a good set of genes, pure luck, and not the fastidiousness that they had falsely admired. It was too much to bear.

I have a new dentist now who does not stock his lobby with trade magazines, but issues of sports and fitness magazines instead. And while my teeth are still perfect, once this dentist begins to have expectations, I’ll find another.

A short downhill follows, at first fast and hardpacked, then suddenly super muddy and slippery, massive puddles, large gapping diagonal washouts, loose and slippery rocks, and very steep at times. Some sections are not very rideable, and it is probably a little early to get injured. There is a river crossing at the bottom, never know how deep it is unless you got a rider in front of you. And of course there are other climbs, suddenly you realize that the 8 o’clock mark is only a few minutes around the corner, where the hell is the checkpoint. Another gnarly muddy slippery downhill ending in a river, except this time you ride in the river along against the current, then the river suddenly splits, you bank left through the other river, up the slippery slope and there is the 1st checkpoint, finally. It is 7:50am, I made it, but I know there are a lot of riders behind me. I fill my drink bladder, pour in my energy powder, clean the mud of the bike, lube the drivetrain, munch some watermelon and papaya and decide to wait to see if Diane makes the checkpoint. I walk back towards the river and here she comes, 8am sharp, she is safe.

We take care of her bike, food and water and leave for checkpoint 2, compared to the first stage it looks easy on the map. Well let me tell you, it was a total bear. The first downhill, technical and slippery but rideable ended up at a river crossing again, followed by a super muddy uphill, the same scenario basically repeats about 20 times, the trail gets muddier and steeper with every water crossing. Before you realize it your bike is so caked up with red clay mud that the wheels no longer turn, even though you are surrounded by jungle, the sun is relentlessly beating on you, your body is starting to ache from the heavy back-pack you are carrying with all your food, energy gels and bars, tools, tubes, spare chain links, lube, 1st aid items and 100 ounces or rapidly disappearing drinking fluids. You start to feel your arms from pushing, lifting and dragging your bike, it is hard to get traction with your shoes despite new spikes, and I guess this is where the personal growth journey part comes in. There are beautiful waterfalls at some of the river crossings and the scenery is pretty amazing. And you see other riders suffer as much as you do, I stop to help a rider from Mexico with some major chainsuck, a welcome rest. The trail continues and suddenly there is a 5-foot snake slithering across the trail, some 2 inches thick, black and purple shiny skin. As I was finally riding my bike again I decided to ride past its tail end and not give it any further thought.

I made checkpoint 2 in time, tanked up my water bladder, had a tuna sandwich they provided, some fruit and carried on. A super long downhill with only a few hills, all gravel, finally a section to cover some mileage. But soon you realize that every downhill is combined with a much longer and steeper climb on the other end. Downhill = bad. You end up in a river delta with several flat water crossings, the following long climb starts out quite enjoyable, gravel road, higher gear, good speed, easy passing. But the 3rd timecheck is super tight, only 1 hour 15 minutes to cover 12 miles. And these are La Ruta miles, not Island Lake miles.

You are totally exposed to the sun, the heat radiates from the gravel, the humidity wears you down, and the grade gets steeper around every corner and I find myself walking again in the steep sections. Then the up and down starts again, except the river crossings are covered with bridges, every hill is longer than the previous one and you suddenly realize that there is no way that you make the 3rd checkpoint in time, no way. A support truck goes by and the driver yells “only 5 kilometers to the next checkpoint”. 5km, that’s 3 more miles, no way. At this point I had covered some 35 miles since the start this morning and had spent over 7 hours in or next to my saddle. Suddenly I was not feeling well, I started to shiver despite the heat, and I was exhausted, mentally and physically. Over the entire day I always made sure that I drank plenty of fluids, that I sucked down 1 energy gel per hour, that I ate as much as I could stomach at the check points, that I kept feeding and energizing my body. And I never experienced how a thought of another 3 miles to the next checkpoint, the one you were not able to reach in time, could take the wind out of your sails, so suddenly and completely. I was done. I was walking at a snails pace, one foot in front of the other, until Diane had caught up with me. She was still in good spirits...

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